

RODRIGUES

SECOND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

Debate No. 7 of 2007

Sitting of Tuesday 15 May, 2007

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Mathurin at 10.30 am.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

The National Anthem was played

RODRIGUES REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 15 May, 2007

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**The Executive Council
(Formed by Mr. Johnson Roussety)**

Mr. Johnson Roussety	Chief Commissioner, Commissioner responsible for Finance, Economic Affairs, Central Administration, Civil Aviation (administration), Civil status, Customs and Excise (administration), Fisheries, Industrial Development, Information Technology and Telecommunications, Judicial (administration), Legal Services, Marine Services (administration), Meteorology (administration), Postal Services (administration), Registration, State Lands, Statistics in respects of Rodrigues, Town and Country Planning, Tourism, Trade, Commerce and Licensing
Mr. Gaetan Jabeemissar	Deputy Chief Commissioner, Commissioner responsible for Arts and Culture, Consumer Protection, Education (administration), Library Services, Museums, Archives, Historical Sites and buildings, Vocational Training
Mrs. Marie Thérèse CLAIR	Commissioner responsible for Social Security, Child Development, Family Welfare, Social Security(administration), Women's Affairs, Poverty Alleviation
Mr. Franceau Aubret Grandcourt	Commissioner responsible for Environment, Housing, Infrastructure including Highways and Roads and Public Buildings and Utilities, Marine Parks, Transport
Mr. Jean Christian Agathe	Commissioner responsible for Labour and Industrial Relations, Youth and Sports, Employment
Mr. Joseph Allan Ladd Emilien	Commissioner responsible for Community Development, Co-operatives, Fire Services, Health (administration), Prisons and Reform Institutions (administration)
Mr. Louis Ange Perrine	Commissioner responsible for Agriculture, Food Production, Forestry, Handicraft, Plant and animal quarantine, Water Resources

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

Mr. Chairperson - Lamvohee, Mr. Joseph Chenlye

Clerk - Toulouse, Louis Richard

Sergeant -at-Arms - Louis, Mr. Jorgenson

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson Sir, it was with deep sorrow that we have learnt the death of late Mr. France FELICITÉ on Friday 11th May 2007, at the age of 67 years. Mr. France FELICITÉ had joined the Police Force in 1967 and was promoted police servant in 1981. During the same year he resigned from the Police Force to engage in political activities. He was elected as member of the National Assembly at the General Election of 1982 and was reelected in 1983 where he was appointed Minister for Rodrigues and outer Island by the then Prime Minister Sir Aneerood JUGNATH. Mr. France FELICITÉ held the office of Minister for Rodrigues until the General Election of 1987. It is to be noted that during his terms of office, Mr. FELICITÉ was much embarrass when his political party dissociated itself of the Government without notifying the then Minister. It is generally agreed that he discharge his duty of Minister of Rodrigues with dedication and the population recognised that he was always available, to consider the problems or projects for the advancement of the socio economic development of the Island. He created his own political party Known as the *Rassemblement Regroupement du peuple de Rodrigues* and was candidate with Honorable Nicolas VONMALLY for the election in 1987. He was appointed adviser to the Prime Minister on outer island development from 87 to 91.

Since 1996, Mr. France FELICITÉ has created the high Security Services Agency Company Limited and since that his employees has been providing security services to Governmental institution and private companies. Mr. Chairperson Sir, as you are aware, on the occasion of the Rodrigues Day 2006, my Regional Government confers the title of honorary freeman upon Mr. France FELICITÉ for his contribution in the development of Rodrigues. In recognition for his past contribution in the development of Rodrigues, consideration will be given to name a public place, or street, or School, or college in Rodrigues after late Mr. France FELICITÉ. Mr. Chairperson Sir, I form part of the new generation of politician in Rodrigues while I consider that Mr. France FELICITÉ form part of the older generation. I wish to put on recall my appreciation of the personality of Mr. France FELICITÉ who was always a person with an open mind and whom you could have a very frank and direct discussion. Mr. Chairperson Sir, I would like to invite you to direct the clerk to convey the condolences of this Assembly to the widow and the three children of late Mr. France FELICITÉ. Thank you.

Minority Leader: Monsieur le président, je me joins au Chef Commissaire pour présenter à l'épouse, aux enfants, frères et soeurs et proches mes sympathies et soutien et ceux de mes collègues. Monsieur France FELICITÉ a servi dans la Force Policière pendant plusieurs années. Et durant ces années comme certain des Rodriguais il a du faire face a un manque de considération.

C'était l'époque où les Policiers Rodriguais pouvaient accéder difficilement à une promotion. Fatigué par ce manque de considération et d'injustice, il s'engagea dans la politique afin d'apporter sa contribution dans le combat contre l'injustice dont était victime les policiers Rodriguais et ceux et celle dans la fonction publique. C'est à partir de 1982 que commença le combat pour la réorganisation de la force policière et de la fonction publique à Rodrigues. Et aujourd'hui nous pouvons constater avec fierté que la force policière est composée par une majorité de Rodriguais, de Rodriguaise, que tous les services de fonction publique à Rodrigues sont composés par une grande majorité de Rodriguais et de Rodriguaise. Monsieur France FELICITÉ a participé à ce combat et à ce changement. En tant que Ministre de Rodrigues, il accomplit sa tâche avec capacité en portant pendant quelques années sa contribution au développement de Rodrigues. Son engagement dans la vie sociale et dans les mouvements de l'église lui a fait découvrir que tout homme et toute femme quel qu'il soit son engagement est au service de son pays, des autres et de sa famille. Il a montré après avoir abandonné la politique en créant une société en service de gardes et de surveillance. Il a quitté ce monde en laissant derrière lui quelques bons souvenirs et une famille prête à faire face à la vie avec courage et volonté. Aujourd'hui à l'occasion de la journée internationale de la famille, je souhaite à toutes les familles de Rodrigues de travailler en l'unité et la solidarité de la famille base de la société. Puis je vous demande Monsieur le Président, de présenter à Madame FELICITE et à ses enfants nos sympathies les plus sincères et fraternelles. Je vous remercie.

Mr. Chairperson: Yes.

Commissioner Jabeemisar: Mr. Chairperson Sir, allow me to say a few words to *petribute* to one officer of my commission who passed away last week. I am talking about Mr. Helio ETIENNE. Mr. Helio ETIENNE joined the service on 15 January 1979 and was appointed teacher/Senior Teacher on 31st October 1979. He was first posted as teacher at St. Therese de l'enfant Jesus RCA School in Riviere Coco, he has also worked in different schools. He was promoted Deputy Head Teacher on 2nd April 2004 and was posted at Batatran Government School. Mr. ETIENNE has worked as coordinator of the Basic Education for the Adolescent (BEFA), in the years 2002 to 2004, as teacher and also as Deputy Head Teacher, Mr. ETIENNE showed much dedication to his work. He loved working with children, especially children of lower abilities and had a caring attitude towards their welfare. In addition, during his Deputy Headship, he used to assist the Head Teacher in monitoring and conducting working sessions for Teachers for improvement of the teaching and learning process. He participated actively in the organisation of cultural events namely the *Festival Creole* and the Rodrigues Day as he was an executive member and also president of sub committee respectively. He was also the ex president of the association des Artistes de Rodrigues. On behalf of my commission and my own name, I like to extend my sincere condolences to the ...family of the deceased. Thank you.

Chairperson: I wish to join the Chief Commissioner and the Minority Leader in their expression of sympathy and condolences to the family of late Mr. France FELICITÉ. I will direct the Clerk to convey our expression of sympathy to the wife and the three children of the decease. Thank you. I have one last announcement to make. Respected members further to the resolution of the house on the 24th of April, 2007, to set up a select committee on the conversion of state land, I have to inform the house that I have appointed 5 members to sit on the committee as follows:-

- (1) Mr. Johnson ROUSSETY, the Chief Commissioner
- (2) Mr. Allan Ladd EMILIEN, Commissioner for Health
- (3) Mr. Christian AGATHE, Commissioner for Sports
- (4) Mrs. Lordana CHAN MEUNIER, Deputy Chairperson
- (5) Mr. Desiré Laval GUILLAUME, the 4th Island Region Member

Respected members prior consultation has been made with both side of this house that is with the Chief Commissioner and the Minority Leader. In a letter dated 08 May 2007 addressed to me, the Minority Leader informed me that the Minority Group has decided not to form part of the select committee. The letter is being kept on record at the Secretariat. I am consequently fixing the first meeting of the committee on Monday 21st of May, 2007 at 10.30 a.m at the seat of this Assembly. Thank you. Yes next item please.

Chairperson: Respected members I wish to inform this house at this stage, that all the 7 members of the Minority side have today in writing withdrew all the questions which appear on today's order paper. They have kindly informed me that they felt that Rodrigues is still under shock as a result of the disappearances of officers and the fisherman at sea. And they wish to do that in expression of their solidarity to the families of the persons who disappeared at sea. Thank you. So, we only have question standing on the order paper, standing in the name of some members of the majority starting from questions 83. I wish to make an appear to member whether they will maintain their questions and if so, Can they please ask the questions.

Chief Commissioner: Yes, Mr. Chairperson Sir, I am speaking on behalf of this side of the house, and we are removing all the questions, the members of this side of the house had ... for today's sitting. With your permission, I now wish to make a statement on the disappearances which have occurred at sea.

Chairperson: Ok, so we move to the next item which is statements. Clerk yes.

Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson Sir, I which to brief this Assembly on the accidents which have occurred at sea on Sunday last. Namely the capsizing of a fisherman boat at *passe plate* at around noon and the capsizing of two rescue boat of the National coast Guard at Pointe butt at Grand basin region in the evening on the same day.

I have been informed at around 1 p.m on Sunday that 3 fishermen were reported missing following the capsizing of their boat at the spot call *passe Ile plate*. I was also informed that leisure craft boat bouba diver at Mourouk Ebony Hotel have immediately call on the spot and have brought ashore the capsize boat without the occupance. As Commissioner for fisheries, I immediately sought for information from the National Coast Guard and at the same time I ordered the office in charge of the Fisheries Protection Service to send to the side of the wreck a maximum number of boats available at the Petite Butte fisheries post to search in the lagoon for the missing persons. They are namely: Mr. Gabriel EVENOR, 55 yrs old of Mont Plaisir, Mr. Jean Marc PIERRELOUIS, 42 yrs old of Lataniers, Mr. Joseph Etienne PERRINE, 35 yrs old of Lataniers. I was then informed that a National Coast Guard rescue boat had left Pointe Monier and was sailing for *passe ile plate* when it had had a problem with its stirring mechanism somewhere after Coco Island. Another National Coast Guard rescue boat was then sent to ----- to port the 1st rescue boat. Mr. Chairperson Sir, as members are aware, Rodrigues as well as the mascareigns islands have been hit since Saturday by tidal waves cause by meteorological phenomenon occurring far down in the Indian Ocean. On their way back to Pointe Monier, the two National Coast Guard Boats during the night have had to face a very furious sea that is very dangerous navigation condition. It is estimated that around 8p.m the two boats capsized under the repetitive assault of the tidal waves near grand Pointe. The officers of the National Coast guard were then left in the open sea and had to manage to save their lives. During the whole night these men staying in the open sea, some manage to come to the lagoon and this is why five of them had been rescued with light injuries early on Monday.

However I have to report that two officers are still missing namely Constable Judex PERRINE and Christopher PHILLIPE. Early on Monday morning, my office coordinated a search and rescue operation with the help of the Fisheries Research and Training Unit, the Fisheries Protection Services, the National Coast Guard and the Private boat owners. Searches were carried out at both *passé ile aux plate* and at Grand Pointe. The two capsize boats of the National Coast Guard were immediately located and taught to Port Mathurin. The *dornier* aircraft had in the mean time taken off to help in the searches. However the aircraft could not stay over the search zone the whole day due to unavailable technical applications. Searches for the five missing persons were also carried out both inside the lagoon and outside without concluding results until late Monday last night. Yesterday, I held a coordination meeting in my office to organise search and rescue for today. Two teams have been set. One to search for the three fishermen and one to search for the two NCG Officers. I was informed that the dornier has landed at Plaine Corail with six divers to help in the searches. All available resources are being mobilized and will be evenly use in the searches. An operation room for the coordination of activity has been set up at my office. The deputy commissioner of police Mr. Jean Bruno and the commander of the National Coast Guard Mr. Nevi are coordinating the search operation.

I have just been informed that due to deterioration in sea conditions and the risks that more boats are being sunk, most of the boats participating in the rescue operations are now returning to the coast and will resume operation once the sea condition allow for it. In mean time, I have invited the Commissioner responsible for family affairs to provide all necessary supports to the five families of the missing persons.

My office have provided this morning necessary emergency financial assistance to the families of the three missing fisherman. Mr. Chairperson Sir, I wish the house to know that the state of preparedness of Rodrigues in the circumstances which have occurred is very low. On Sunday night we had to organised early morning rescue and we had to face many logistics problems. The coordination between the different services has been very poor due to the lack of a proper predefine professional framework or plan. We will have to work on this aspect to increase our state of preparedness and to better be able to response to such occurrences.

My office will stir emergency plan in this sense together with the relevant services. Mr. Chairperson Sir, no effort is being spared to search for the five men. As a fisherman myself and as a matter of solidarity I was on board of one of the boat engage in search and rescue together with Commissioner Allan Ladd EMILIEN yesterday. I wish to thank all those who are engage in the searches and wish to put on record the contribution of all those still at sea currently. I also wish to extend my deepest sorrow to the National Coast Guard and to praise the courage of those then who while trying to save the life of others, has put theirs in great danger. I have to say to the families of the three fishermen that we have to keep faith and to hope that we will be able to find them. I associate myself to them in this tragedy moments and pray god for them. Thank you.

Chairperson: Yes, you wish to say something. Please wait, please wait. Unfortunately we are at statement time by Commissioners. After the motion for Adjournment. Yes any statement by other commissioners.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson Sir, I move that the house be adjourn to Tuesday 17 July 2007 at 10.30 am.

The Deputy Chief Commissioner rose and seconded

Question put and agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT MATTER

Minority Leader: Monsieur le Président, de ce cote de la chambre nous avons décidé hier, suite au disparu en mer des trois pêcheurs, et de deux officiers de Coast Guard, de retirer toutes les questions prévu pour cette assemblée ce matin. Puis que déjà les recherches sont en cours pour retrouver le corps de ces personnes. Et que les familles sont accabler et toutes la population sont en émoi. Hier j'étais a Pointe Monnier, quand le bateau qui amener les bateaux du Coast Guard, fallait voir les gens qui accourrait pour voir s'il y avait sur le bateaux Neptune , s'il y avait des corps qu'on avait pu repêcher.

Nous pensons que aujourd'hui cette île Rodrigues, cette mer rodriguaise, on a vu aussi a la Réunion et l'île Maurice comment ces houles géantes peuvent faire autan de dégâts qu'un cyclone et emporter des vies. Nous souhaitons que les recherches continuent et que les familles attendent qu'on puisse au moins retrouver les corps disparus. Nous participons a la souffrance de la famille EVENOR, PIERRE LOUIS et PERRINE, SPEVILLE et PHILLIPE, nous leur souhaitons du courage et qu'ils gardent toujours l'espoir qu'on puissent retrouver les corps.

Je souhaite Monsieur le Président, que à l'avenir il y a beaucoup plus de précautions prises concernant les navigations en mer. Et j'en ai parlé à quelques officiers, à Maurice et ici a Rodrigues, qu'il faudra essayer de voir comment équiper notre pays de bateau convenables pour que vraiment les sauvetages en mer puissent se faire convenablement.

Nous savons qu'à Plaine corail il était prévu *National Coast Guard* post avec un bateau qui pourrait en cas de *crash* en mer, qui pourraient justement sauver des vies. Souhaitons que le Gouvernement centrale puissent arriver a mettre tout cela en pratique et je suis sure que le Premier Ministre et d'autre Ministre et l'Assemblée Régional ici puissent arriver justement a l'avenir tenir compte parce que très souvent les chose ont tarder malgré l'insistance demander. Ils aurait fallu peut être que des pertes de vie puissent amener le Gouvernement centrale a se ressaisir a comprendre que c'est une île fragile, que la mer autour de nous c'est une mer qui vraiment n'est pas aussi calme et nous savons entre Maurice et Rodrigues comment la mer est a des moments difficile. Donc, nous participons à la souffrance de tout ces familles et que l'espoir continue a exister dans notre esprits qu'au moins nous puissions les retrouver même mort. Merci.

Chairperson: Chief Commissioner and Commissioner for Fisheries, you want to response. Yes we are at adjournment time.

Chief Commissioner: Mr. Chairperson Sir, as a matter of principal, I would like to precise that the first mission of the search and rescue is to search for alive Coast Guard and Fishermen. The last thing that we wish is that these people are dead at this day. The "*dornier*" as well as all the other boats are searching in the first instance for people who are still alive. And following the

statement of the Minority Leader, I wish to reassure the families that these people may still be alive at this hour. Because if these persons have their life jackets on them, they may still be drifting somewhere in the open sea and we are doing our best to find them. It is not correct now to speak of death Mr. Chairperson Sir. Thank you.

The Chairperson: Yes, this House stands adjourn.

(On its rising at 11.00 -hours, the Assembly stood adjourned to Tuesday 17 July 2007 at 10.30 am)